new masses

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BRITAIN

Crisis of a Junior Partner

by R. PALME DUTT

La Guardia

GUERRILLA WARRIOR

by S. W. GERSON

United Nations

MARSHALL'S STRATEGY

by JOHN STUART

THE HUNT

Hanns Eisler and Hollywood

by N. A. DANIELS and BILL GROPPER

Howard Fast's "Clarkton" reviewed by S. Finkelstein

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just a minute

BARNEY RUBIN, the enterprising "Broadway Beat" columnist in the *Daily Worker*, recently reviewed *State of the Nation*. Not to be outdone this department went last week to see another oldie, *Oklahoma!* But we won't review it—you've heard all the songs on the radio if you haven't seen the show, and you know that its dances are purty. The highlight of our evening, however, came after the show.

Now you know that there's only one thing for the true cosmopolite to do After Theater and that's to go to the Persian Room. We didn't. Nedick's is nice—not a bit provincial either—and there's no cover charge on the hamburger. Besides it's brightly lit, an excellent spot to read your theater program and learn who was who and which was which. And there's a lot to learn that you'd otherwise miss. Like the fact that Jane Fischer, the little chorine who does pratt-falls in one of the numbers, made her debut in the ballet of the St. Louis Municipal Opera and later danced in the ballet of the Radio City Music Hall.

More useful intelligence was to be found in the columns of type which lead you through the ads. Under the heading "What the Man Will Wear," we read about a new dinner-jacket which a "well-known British peer" saw at Shepheard's in Cairo and subsequently displayed along Florida's Gold Coast and the Riviera's Blue Coast. It's ivory-colored. A casual, "clubby" style, it just fills the niche between the orthodox white dinner-jacket and the conventional midnight-blue affair. We were warned that country clothes are only for "turfy, woodsy places," and that the "well-turned-out townster" will prepare for the forthcoming autumn with more cityfied toggery. No argument there. But a concluding line on clothing colors gave us pause. "Brown, pushed aside in the recoil of the war, is by way of being taken up again." Speaking in behalf of several million guys who are definite—but definite—that Olive Drab is Out-Dated, we would sound a note of caution to Mr. Beaunash not to go to far on the rebound.

An even more alarming item was found in the ladies' fashion column. "It is therefore natural that not only last year's dresses, last year's coats and suits and hats, are looking suddenly scant and skimpy as they emerge from the mothballs . . . but so are last year's nightgowns and negligees, and many another garment which, because it is never called upon to face public competition, might have been expected to prove good almost indefinitely." Well, that's what we would have thought. But "unhappily for optimists who had hoped to retrieve at least a winter housecoat from last year's store of leftovers, such items look, if anything, scantier and skimpier than almost anything else." Everything must be longer, and fuller. Ye gods — bloomers and/or pantalettes! Which reminds us of the wonderful quip California's Bob Kenney addressed to the current arbiters of political fashions: "If you don't like this century, go back to the one you came from!"

NEW MASSES welcomes the work of new writers and artists. That's what it says in agate-size type elsewhere on this page. Maybe you've never noticed that line but many readers have and send in drawings, stories, poems, articles and editorials —maybe too many of the latter. Recently we received a cartoon from Joe Blow, whom we'd always thought was purely a mythical character. He's not. A fifteen-year-old Californian, his first contribution appears herewith. Now how about you, Kilroy?

L. L. B.

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BRITAIN: Crisis of a Junior Partner

Bevin and Attlee play second fiddle while London burns. The price of anti-Sovietism: less bread, more debt. The first of two articles.

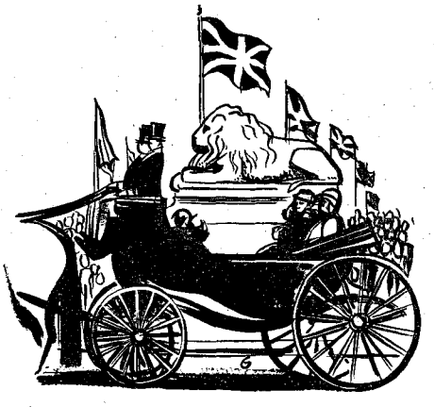
By R. PALME DUTT

London.

THE present crisis in Britain expresses the bankruptcy of the internal and external policy of the Labor government. Two years ago the people of Britain turned out Churchill and the Tories and elected a Labor government amid the good will of democratic and progressive people throughout the world. High hopes were expressed on many sides that this turn of the British people to the left would result in a policy which would enable Britain to play an honorable part among the progressive nations of the world. Today a very different picture is revealed. The high hopes that were then so widely expressed failed to take into account that while the British people had voted against toryism and for a program promising progressive and socialist aims, the government formed was based on the extreme right wing of Social Democracy, closely allied in outlook and fundamental policy to Churchill and the Tories.

The new government did indeed carry out certain limited measures of nationalization and social reform—although very tardily and in a very bureaucratic fashion. Tories and big-business directors were placed at all the key economic points in the new nationalized sector, and with high compensation paid to the stockholders. No change was achieved in class relations of wealth, and in practice real wages have fallen while profits have soared.

But at the same time the government pursued a Tory foreign policy of a reactionary imperialist character, inspired and applauded by Churchill. Britain was lined up with the most ruthless and aggressive American imperialism. Blindly trusting in the American loan and in American financial aid to see it through (at the same time that the United States was in fact using the terms of the loan agreement to weaken Britain economically and press forward to the capture of world markets), the government made no attempt to develop or carry through any plan of economic reconstruction at home. It let capitalist industry indulge in an anarchic get-rich-quick scramble for maximum profit, so that the unessential and luxury industries (the production of knick-knacks and junk, and betting pools and entertainment) swelled most rapidly, while the basic industries were starved. The loan was squandered mainly on the armed forces and overseas military adventures, and also on unchecked dollar luxury imports of the rich (left unchecked in the name of the principle of "non-discrimination" imposed by the loan agreement), and less than one-seventh of it was used for the purchase of machinery.



Now the bill has arrived. The shipwreck, which the Communists long ago predicted as the inevitable outcome of this policy, is here. The loan is exhausted not in five years, as originally intended, not in three years, as the government now claims it had expected, but in fourteen months. There remains in Britain's possession only six hundred million pounds [the pound is worth $4.03] in gold and foreign securities, or less than one-fifth of the sterling debts of over three thousand million. There is a deficit on the balance of trade running at seven hundred million a year. The government is imposing heavy cuts in food imports and in the standard of living of the people. But it still clings to the old extravagant foreign and military imperialist policy, with armed forces of a million and a quarter which will remain over a million next year. It still places its hopes in Mr. Marshall and the dollar imperialists, although these are more and more manifestly turning the screw on Britain to impose merciless conditions for any aid, and to demand further changes in policy to the right, to cut down even

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the limited social measures which have been achieved.

Such is the outcome of two years of the rule of Social Democracy.

IN VAIN government ministers today endeavor to blame everything for the crisis except their own policy. They blame the war, the two world wars, Britain's sacrifices in the war, the intervening years, the old Tory record, the hard winter, the rise in dollar prices, the "failure of some workers," etc.

Undoubtedly Britain's situation at the end of the war was not easy and called for a great effort at reconstruction. Not merely war losses, but long years of monopolistic control had brought down the basic industries. The economy of Britain had been built on a basis of Empire exploitation, with imports drawn as tribute from all over the world and in increasing proportion (half by the eve of the war) unpaid by exports. Now that basis has broken down and Britain has to live by its own production effort.

But Britain's assets and resources in productive power, in the national resources of coal and iron, in the fertility of the land, in industrial power and in the skill of the workers are very great. War destruction has been far less in Britain than in many other European war-devastated countries which are now making a striking post-war recovery. The crisis is not a naturally inevitable catastrophe due to external causes outside the government's control. The decisive cause is the policy which has squandered Britain's resources for the old costly imperialist aims and neglected the tasks of reconstruction.

The facts are inescapable. Recently the authoritative "Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics" published a statistical survey of the expenditure of Britain's national income in 1946. This survey showed that Britain's national resources in 1946 were fourteen percent above the pre-war level. But the expenditure of this enlarged income was as follows: Personal consumption had decreased (despite the increase in population) by two percent. New capital investment had decreased by nine percent. Public non-military expenditure (social services, etc.) had increased by three percent. Military expenditure had increased by 249 percent. These figures show clearly where the resources made available by

ELEMENTARY RIGHTS OF LABOUR
Value of U.S. Loans
"What makes some people so sure that we would pursue a reactionary course in Europe, eh?"
Gabriel

The American Way of Life, as seen by the London Daily Worker.

the American loan, were being squandered.

More than the total of the American loan has been spent not for the purposes of the needs of the people or for reconstruction, but for the foreign policy of overseas military expenditure and subsidies. When Churchill declared in a speech at Blenheim Palace in July of this year that "since the war we have spent or loaned abroad, without any return, over £740 million or more than the total we have so far spent from the American loan," he was making a highly unscrupulous, demagogic use of the price of the policy for which he bears the main responsibility (for Bevin, Attlee, Morrison, Alexander and the rest have been no more than docile agents of Churchill's policy and not its originators); but on the facts there was no attempt at an answer from the side of the government.

GOVERNMENT ministers speak of the deficit in Britain's balance of payments as if the people had been consuming too much and not producing enough, and therefore demand that the people must consume less and produce more as the only solution. But they neglect the main cause of the deficit. Of the total deficit of £400 million in 1946, £300 million represented government overseas expenditure, the greater part of which, £225 million, was military expenditure. Why should one and a quarter million men be retained in the armed forces two years after the war, with no enemy in view—three times the level on the very eve of the war with the full Hitler menace looming? Taking into consideration also the numbers engaged in supplying the armed forces, this is equivalent to close on two million people, or one-tenth of the nation's working force, withdrawn from production.

Even the supposed reduction in the armed forces which the government has announced since the crisis only provides for a reduction of 80,000 on the present target for March of next year, still leaving over one million. Thus in 1948, three years after the war, there would still be over a million in the armed forces or, in proportion to population, more than double the American level. Of these, 700,000 will be maintained in Britain. Why should 700,000 troops be maintained in Britain in 1948, except in the expectation of a near major war or threat of war?

The government offers no answer to these questions. Government ministers so voluble on every other question become tongue-tied and coy on the one crucial question, "the commitments of the armed forces." Even on the disposition of the armed forces an iron curtain is maintained; and the Soviet proposals in the United Nations for a plain statement by the powers was vehemently refused by Britain's Labor government. One minister,

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Morrison, during the House of Commons debate in August, made a passing venture into the forbidden ground of the "commitments." "To throw overboard abruptly a number of our most expensive overseas commitments would be to play into the hands of the trouble-makers and the enemies of democracy." If Mr. Morrison expects people to believe that the maintenance of the quislings and Hitlerites in Greece is maintaining "democracy," he is underestimating the intelligence of the people of this country, who don't cast out toryism in order to get it back at the hands of its supposed opponents.

The government still clings to the discredited and costly foreign policy which is at the root of the present crisis. The government seeks to make all its main reduction at the expense of the living standards of the people in order to continue to maintain the costly armed forces and military adventures abroad. Hence the government is unable to present any plan to meet the crisis.

TO THE last, the government failed to foresee the crisis, even though critics from the left repeatedly gave warning of where this policy would lead. The government completely failed to judge correctly the true significance of the American loan, which tied Britain to the Anglo-American bloc, while its crippling provisions (non-discrimination, convertibility and acceptance of the Geneva International Trade Program) were calculated to weaken Britain and intensify its economic difficulties. Instead, ministers in the early days of the loan saw it only in optimistic terms as an easing of Britain's difficulties. "The American loan is a kind of financial blood transfusion to accelerate our economic recovery." (A. Woodburn, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Supply, July 21, 1946.) "With the loan we shall have three or four years in which to bring up our production to balance our export trade." (Sir Stafford Cripps, Feb. 2, 1946.) "The main effect of the loan will be a certain easing of austerity, particularly in petrol and certain foodstuffs." (Douglas Jay, M.P., *Daily Herald* economic expert, July 11, 1946.) "The loan will hasten the time when we can once more play our full part in a vigorous and expanding system of international trade." (H. Dalton, July 14, 1946.)

Contrast this with the serious and explicit warnings given by the Communist Party of the economic crisis which would arise from the government's foreign policy. At the Eighteenth Congress in November, 1945, the Communist Party declared: "We warn the Labor movement that unless it compels the government to change completely its present foreign policy, which is simply the continuation of the imperialist line of the Tory party and the reactionary monopoly capitalists, there can be no fundamental social program in Britain, and the whole future of this country is in grave peril." And again in June, 1946, the Executive Committee issued a statement declaring:

"Antagonism to communism and dependence on American imperialism, instead of friendship with the Soviet Union and the democratic countries of Europe, can only result in the betrayal of the program of social progress for which the country voted at the general election."

By 1947, the signs of the impending storm could no longer be ignored. But the government remained blind. The first signal of the fuel crisis early in 1947 delivered a temporary shock to complacency. But the shock was short-lived; its effects melted with the melting of the snows. The lesson was not learned; the main cause remained unchanged.

The Margate Labor Party Conference in May revealed that the main body of Labor supporters still slumbered in a dreamland of confiding trust in right-wing leadership, cheering the empty theatricalities of Bevin even more thunderously than Ramsay MacDonald used to be cheered, swallowing the suicidal dose of "Cards on the Table" Foreign Office poison, triumphantly routing the Left and banning the Anglo-Soviet friendship movement — without the slightest realization of the rocks in front.

The concluding half of Mr. Dutt's article will appear next week.

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portside patter

By BILL RICHARDS

The Un-American Committee is going to investigate radio. It seems that a substantial number of citizens have found their sets boring from within.

•

The Women's National Republican Club members have pledged to observe two meatless and two wheatless days a week. They might also urge their husbands to observe a few cheatless days as well.

•

Great Britain has told Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria that "flouting freedoms is a crime." The three countries are invited to take this advice from one who knows.

•

It is estimated that UN expenses next year will cost the world only a few pennies for each man, woman and child. On this occasion everyone is welcome to put in his two cents' worth.

•

Herbert Hoover has a plan to avert starvation in Germany. The Germans hope that it is a better plan than the one he didn't have for the United States.

A robot plane has just made its first crossing of the Atlantic. The airlines will soon be able to institute a new service for people who do not want to go to Europe.

•

Representative Cox of Georgia protests that the denazification program is "bypassing some of the best brains in Germany." The man is obviously schacht.

•

American women have been urged to help the British clothing shortage by donating their short dresses. Attlee and Bevin, for their part, will continue to make slips.

•

In a memorable decision a judge has ruled that a wife has a right to go through her husband's pockets while he is asleep. Unfortunately, the trusts have already assumed the same right while he is awake.

•

A scientist warns that an atomic war could ruin mankind by destroying genes. It was an old Chinese philosopher who said, "Man whose head blown off not apt to worry about sprained ankle."

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HOLLYWOOD LETTER

by N. A. Daniels

Hollywood.

THE great semi-annual Hollywood witch-hunt is about to begin and it promises to be quite a show—unless it blows up in J. Parnell Thomas' fat face like the Hughes inquisition blew up in Brewster's. For the moment no odds are being offered and the betting is even on both sides. But anything is likely to happen.

With a fine show of objectivity the publicity-seeking legislator from New Jersey has announced that the mere receipt of a summons to appear before him "should not be considered a reflection in any way upon (the) character or patriotism" of the recipients. No doubt at all that Adolph Menjou, the Man of Distinction; Robert Taylor, who was "forced" to play in the subversive *Song of Russia;* Jack Moffit, a fingerman for the Motion Picture Alliance; Howard Rushmore, a stoolpigeon for Hearst, and Rupert Hughes, the doddering Paul Revere of local reactionaries, will feel that a stamp of approval has been placed upon their patriotism by the summons.

There is some doubt about how others will feel—people like former Ambassador Joseph E. Davies; Dore Schary, executive producer of RKO; Adrian Scott, producer, and Edward Dmytryk (these last three made *Crossfire*)—not to mention Lowell Mellett, Sumner Welles and George S. Messersmith. The roster of the subpoenaed is a curiously balanced list of "friendly" and "hostile" witnesses, which include some of the finest talents in Hollywood—and some of its most outstanding finks and phonies. Summoned to appear are Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson, Ring Lardner, Jr., Lester Cole, Howard Koch (who wrote the screenplay of *Mission to Moscow* and is currently chairman of the Arts, Sciences and Professions council of PCA), Alvah Bessie, Leo McCary, producer, Clifford Odets, Charles Chaplin, Walt Disney, Roy Brewer of the IATSE, Sam Goldwyn (who produced *The Best Years of Our Lives*), Lela "Share-and-Share-Alike" Rogers (mother of Ginger), Larry Parks, Donald Ogden Stewart, Sam. Wood (the alleged director), Berthold Brecht, Hanns Eisler, James K. McGuiness of MGM, George Murphy, Ronald Reagan, Herbert Biberman, William Pomerance (former executive secretary of the Screen Writers Guild) and Sam Moore, president of the Radio Writers Guild.

Most interesting aspect of the whole thing this time is the ambiguous position of the Motion Picture Association, which will be represented by Eric Johnston and Jimmie Byrnes (probably behind the scenes). These gentry have no love for those they call Reds—which includes everyone in favor of higher wages, lower prices and peace — but at the same time they have no intention of seeing their profits and their films attacked by any government agency.

When the then executive director of the MPA made the *faux pas* of announcing a list of "subversive" films at a public meeting, he found himself out of a job within forty-eight hours. When a sixty-dollar-a-week government investigator came into Louis Mayer's office some time ago with a list of people "we want fired," the King of Hollywood (and Santa Anita race-track) is said to have hit the high-vaulted ceiling of his office and thundered that he didn't care what a man thought so long as he wrote good pictures. This is quite a subversive line for Mayer to take, but it is rumored that The Industry will have to take something like that line or be forced to accept some sort of governmental—read Republican—intervention in its affairs.

They will undoubtedly try to clear their skirts and at the same time disassociate themselves from the "enemy agents" who write their most successful pictures. That this will be quite a trick, nobody will doubt.

IT WILL be especially interesting to see what Jack L. Warner does on the stand. When the Un-American Committee visited Hollywood earlier this year he was in a great rush to offer secret testimony before it and was highly praised by Chairman Thomas for his cooperation in providing a blacklist of dangerous thinkers. Since that time Thomas committed the indiscretion of saying publicly that Warner had been pressured during the war, by a Red-loving Roosevelt, into producing *Mission to Moscow.* Whether Warner will accept that insult to his so-called intelligence and integrity and cry *mea culpa,* or whether he will play the hero and spit in the committee's eye, is a moot question here. It all depends, of course, on the "party-line" adopted by the MPA, of which he is a member—a line all fellow-traveling producers will slavishly follow.

Nobody expects that the phonies—Menjou, Taylor, Gary Cooper, Sam Wood, Hughes, Brewer, Lela Rogers, McCary, McGuiness, Reagan, Moffit, Ryskind or Rushmore —will have anything to add to what they have already said in public. For the simple fact of the matter is that the Reds do not dominate or control Hollywood and it is notoriously difficult to prove something that simply isn't true. But it is a good bet that the producers are not going to admit to being dominated by anybody (including the NAM); nor are they going to confess that the "Reds" are so clever that they have been able to slip dangerous thoughts into films which the producers control. Nobody likes to be called a dope, let alone admit to the charge and even boast of it.

And if you think these gentry are not class-conscious, then recall a famous Hollywood story about a film made many years ago in which a chorus-girl said to a theatrical producer, "You mean to say you're going to fire all us girls, after all the money we've made for you?" Jack L. Warner, whose film this was, peremptorily ordered this scene cut on the grounds that it would "give actors a talking-point against producers." How right he was!

No, the attempt is being made—on a national scale—to split the progressive movement down the middle, terrify those who can be terrified and castrate the greatest mass-medium of public entertainment and education that has ever been developed. It is our bet, out here, that the attempt will fail. For if a Goldwyn can be frightened into believing that *The Best Years of Our Lives* is a subversive film, he would be the first to admit it was time for him to go out of business. If a Dore Schary can be frightened into making no more *Crossfires* and a Chaplin be prevented from making a *Monsieur Verdoux,* then it will be high time for all Americans to crawl under the nearest stone and admit that something has happened which must never happen in America—that Americans will accept directives from a governmental agency whose sole function is to tell them what to say, think and believe, on pain of unemployment, ostracism, concentration camps and death.

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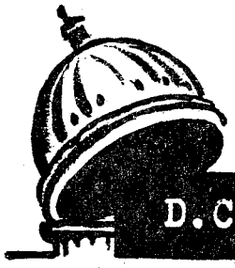

D.C. dateline--

Who Is on Eisenhower's Draft Board?

Washington.

MY FATHER used to say there were two kinds of people who should never be President—college presidents and generals. Shaped by their professions, both are too authoritarian to preside over the destinies of a democracy, he argued. I am sure that if he were alive today he would be very disturbed by the snowballing campaign for Dwight D. Eisenhower, General of the Army and president-designate of Columbia University.

Such information as trickles down to Washington from Wall Street and Park Avenue suggests there are grounds for concern. I have been told by correspondents who have more intimate relations with those two thoroughfares than I that the men whose decisions count in the GOP have settled on a Republican ticket of Eisenhower and Stassen. With the okay from downtown, the wealthy Park Avenue residents are already building up a kitty to finance the pre-convention campaign, I am told.

The Eisenhower ticket does not reflect any lack of confidence in Taft or Dewey on the part of the nation's financial leaders. It was rather one of those inspirations born of necessity. Neither of the two leading contenders can win the nomination on the first ballot and the delegates pledged to each are sufficient to threaten a deadlocked convention. If the deadlock is broken in favor of either Taft or Dewey, the bitterness between the two factions is so deep that the Republican machine might be disastrously split.

The problem, as the Wall Streeters see it, is to select a third candidate associated with neither faction, around whom a united GOP campaign can be waged. Senate President Arthur Vandenberg has been ruled out as inacceptable. As a consequence of his close identification with the Truman foreign policy, he is anathema in Chicago *Tribune* circles and slightly suspect even among run-of-the-mill Republicans. Harold Stassen was vetoed for the top position because his outspoken hostility to Dewey made him something less than a unifying influence.

The recent flurry of newspaper attention to Eisenhower was not accidental. Largely it was engineered by Vincent Astor's *Newsweek* and the magazine's potent policy-maker, Raymond Moley. Moley secured a letter endorsing Eisenhower from Alf M. Landon of Kansas, technically the general's home state. (It is an axiom of politics that a boom must start in the candidate's own bailiwick.) But with a generosity unusual among journalists, Moley did not save the letter for his own column and scoop the country. He released it to political writers in the capital, for use a full day ahead of his own syndicated column.

Newsweek was thus able to comment in its September 15 issue that "by last week the murmur [for Eisenhower's nomination] had become a roar. Columnists Thomas L. Stokes of United Features Syndicate, Roscoe Drummond of the *Christian Science Monitor* and S. Burton Heath of the Newspaper Enterprise Association were taking the Eisenhower boom seriously."

It is freely admitted here that top Democrats are considerably exercised by the Eisenhower boomlet, all the more so because only a few weeks ago Secretary of Agriculture Anderson was urging Truman to persuade the general to accept the vice-presidential nomination on a Truman-Eisenhower ticket. Gael Sullivan, that Arrow-collar ad who until recently ran the party's headquarters, has been optimistic as to Truman's chances against Taft or Dewey. But barring the unforeseen, neither Sullivan nor the most ardent Trumanite would expect the Man from Missouri to offer serious competition to the famous war hero.

IKE's attitude toward the nomination is pretty well known, despite attempts to make it a mystery. He wants to be drafted. He wants to be reluctant and then yield to the overpowering demand of the people. He is slightly skeptical that the politicians can arrange this without tipping their hand. If they are sufficiently skillful about it, and if the invitation to run is broad enough to have the appearance of a nonpartisan public demand, he will answer the call of duty like a good soldier—and, it might be added, like a politics-wise candidate.

One of the chief virtues of Ike as a candidate, next to his war record and his personal charm, is popular ignorance as to his attitude on political issues. A few months ago, no one could even assert positively which party he favored. What he thinks about high prices, the Taft-Hartley Act, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are, so far as the public is concerned, matter for pure conjecture. His backers are saying he is a "middle-of-the-roader," but that means nothing. If he were a real middle-roader, in the same sense as FDR, he would not have these backers.

For his sponsors certainly do not lack knowledge of his position on the major questions of the day. No one becomes head of Columbia University, let alone Wall Street's presidential choice, without careful screening by some of the more important Morgan partners. The astute observer will not have missed the paragraph in the newspapers last week which announced that Ike was the house-guest at the upstate New York estate of Thomas B. Watson, president of International Business Machines. Watson is a notorious open-shopper, one of the few really big ones who remain.

The legend of Ike the national hero, above class and above party, will of course be hard to down. The essence of the problem is suggested by an incident back in June, 1945, a couple of weeks after VE-Day. Ike had returned to Washington, and the newsmen had gathered in the large theater atop the Pentagon for a press conference. The general was immaculate in his uniform, a little tired but still wearing his friendly, boyish smile.

When he strode to the platform, followed at a respectful distance by the then Secretary of War Robert Patterson, the large room echoed in a thunderous burst of spontaneous applause from the newspapermen. It was without precedent in this city of somewhat cynical reporters.

The Eisenhower boom has been very depressing to progressives here, including some of the Henry Wallace forces. But this strikes me as the short view. If the election were held today, Eisenhower could win more votes than either Truman or Wallace. But the sort of grassroots political upheaval which would be necessary to secure the Democratic nomination for Wallace as against Truman would also affect Wallace's chances *vis-a-vis* Eisenhower.

A. L. J.

A.L.J. is a well-known Washington correspondent. His column will appear regularly in NEW MASSES.

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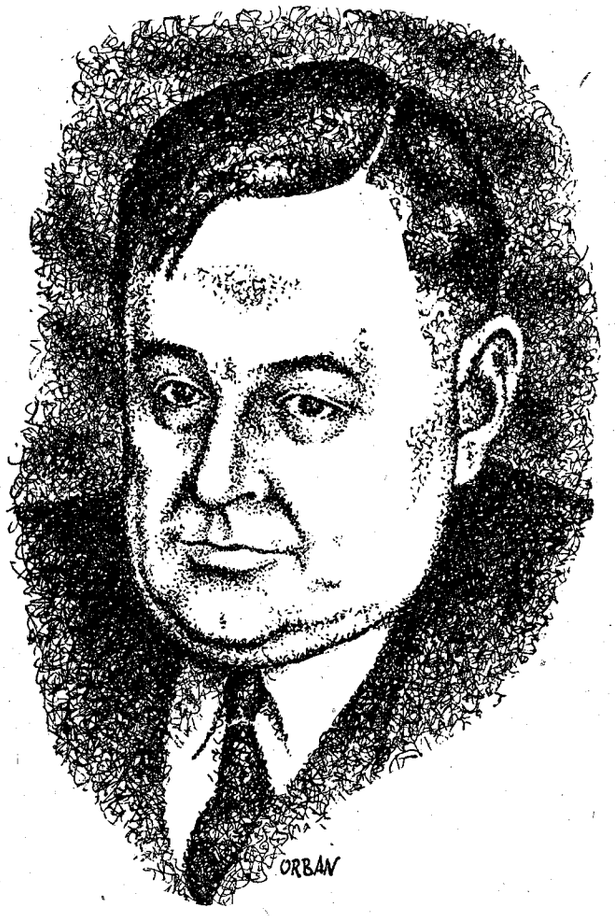
LA GUARDIA: Guerrilla Warrior

He scorned the political bosses and fought the people's battles in colorful style. What made the last of the old-party mavericks tick?

By S. W. GERSON



STUDENTS of American political phenomena might profitably examine contemporary accounts of an elaborate funeral ceremony at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Sept. 22, 1947. For on that day was buried an incredible figure in American politics, a man who was at times John the Baptist in the Hoover wilderness, a St. Vitus of the hustings and a Haroun-al-Raschid of Bagdad-on-the-Hudson—all rolled in one. He was, of course, Fiorello Henry La Guardia, last of the old party mavericks, political guerrilla warrior extraordinary and fountainhead of what is destined to become the La Guardia Legend.

As the organ swelled and rumbled the "Death March" from Saul in the cathedral gloom, it must have seemed to many an observer that more than a man had died. An era had come to an end. Something unique had passed out of American life. The whole community gamut filed passed his bier—Communist Councilman Peter V. Cacchione and financier John D. Rockefeller, Red Hook longshoreman and Harlem cook, Sunnyside housewife and Fifth Avenue patrician, men representing the Soviets and men from His British Majesty's government. But the bulk of the mourners were "little people," whose identification with La Guardia was undoubtedly the guiding thread in the multi-colored skein of his life.

The man who was to become New York City's only thrice-elected reform mayor and an internationally-known progressive was born in a Varick Street tenement on Dec. 11, 1882, the son of Achille La Guardia of the Adriatic province of Foggia, and Irene Coen Luzzatti, a Venetian girl of Portuguese Jewish extraction. In a period when Italian immigrants were regarded principally as useful for the supply of ditch-diggers the elder La Guardia moved to the West, where as an expert cornetist he got a job as an Army bandmaster. There Fiorello grew up at Fort Whipple, near Prescott, Arizona, in an atmosphere denied to most Italian-American youngsters. At sixteen he became a correspondent for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, went to Tampa with his father's outfit and was with him when the latter contracted dysentery from the infamous "embalmed beef" served the soldiers by patriotic contractors. Shortly after his father's illness the whole family returned to Europe, living in Budapest just before the elder La Guardia died, leaving eighteen-year-old Fiorello to support his mother and himself.

The man who was to return forty-six years later to Central Europe as the director-general of UNRRA was introduced to government affairs by a temporary clerkship in the Budapest consulate. From there he advanced to acting consular agent at Fiume at $300 a year and became, in the words of an anonymous State Department official, "the worst headache in the history of the Department." It was at Fiume, a port of embarkation for many Central European emigrants, that the youthful La Guardia had his headline-making run-in with the Archduchess Maria Josefa of Austria. It seems that the great lady came to Fiume one day and wanted to witness an embarkation of emigrants for the Western world. There were ships in the harbor but to grant the royal dame's request would have meant that the peasant emigrants would have had to sleep in steerage for five days until the ships weighed anchors. La Guardia flatly refused and set off what was to become an international incident.

Returning shortly thereafter to

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the States, La Guardia worked for a while as an interpreter at Ellis Island and attended New York University law school at night. His entrance into politics as a Republican was fortuitous. "From the practical point of view," writes Jay Franklin, a friendly biographer, "La Guardia had to be a New York City Republican—and an irregular one, at that—if he were to get anywhere in a political career. Where the Democrats had cornered the Irish vote, the Republicans had won a majority of the Italian vote throughout the nation, and with a Fusion administration on the way in the city it would have been folly for the young Western lawyer to identity himself with Tammany Hall."*

It was almost as difficult for La Guardia to get along with the Republican bosses and he repeatedly had to fight for nominations or, having received them, overcome not only Tammany opposition but Republican sabotage. This he finally did in 1916 when he was elected to Congress from a hitherto Tammany stronghold on the East Side. He enlisted in the Army, gave distinguished service as a flyer on the Italian front, returned a major to defeat Socialist Scott Nearing in 1918 for Congress, was elected president of the Board of Aldermen in 1919, unsuccessfully sought the Republican mayoralty nomination in 1921 and reached his low point, politically and emotionally, that fall when his beautiful young wife and little daughter died within a month of each other.

Temporarily retired from politics and spiritually stunned, he slowly recovered himself, opening the law office of La Guardia, Sapinsky and Amster. It was in that office that he helped the young law student Vito Marcantonio. That summer he was given the Republican nomination for Congress in the 20th Congressional District (East Harlem) and slammed through to an unexpected victory in a maniacal campaign.

This period — 1923-1932, the Hoover-Coolidge era and the depression years — saw a new, more tempered La Guardia. It was in this period that he rallied to the other insurgents within the Republican Party and, allied with liberal Democrats, harassed the GOP high command. His idols those days were Senators La Follette and Norris and his thinking ran along their lines. His platform, most of which is now on our statute books, was considered wild-eyed then. It included minimum wage legislation, abolition of child labor, social security, abolition of labor-injunctions and national maternity laws. The Norris-La Guardia Anti-Injunction Law, now weakened by the Taft-Hartley Act, was one of the capstones in his legislative career as was his almost single-handed defeat of the Baruch-Hearst-Hoover federal sales tax proposal.

It was in this period that he displayed his contempt for old party regularity and a phenomenal political agility combined with fidelity to progressive principle. Consistently he flouted the will of his own party bosses as well as those who led the Democratic Party. When the moment seemed opportune for association with a third party, he did so with a resounding crash. Breaking with the GOP he cast his lot with La Follette and decided to seek reelection as a Progressive in 1924. He carried his district under a third party emblem.

Swept under by the Roosevelt landslide of 1932—he was running as an anti-Hoover Republican and was cordially hated by GOP as well as Tammany leaders—he made active preparations for the 1933 campaign. He knew that the GOP had given him the mayoralty nomination in 1929 because of its utter hopelessness. But he had lived to see everything he said about Jimmy Walker and the Tammany regime fully proved. This, he felt, was his moment.

MUCH has been written about La Guardia's three terms as mayor of New York and great efforts expended to explain them simply in terms of personality. There is no doubt that La Guardia was able to blend powerful disparate forces, but even his magnetism would have been unavailing had there not been terrific social pressures for a local New Deal. His election in 1933 came on the heels of the great New York unemployment movement, treated so cavalierly by Tammany and its representatives at City Hall. The Fusion sweep occurred only one year after FDR and the New Deal had routed Hooverism. Tammany was materially and morally weakened, particularly among the working people, and the various county Democratic organizations were at loggerheads. Of such soil grew the unique multi-class Fusion movement that swept La Guardia into office. The techniques he employed in his twelve-year tenure are deserving of detailed study on another occasion, but suffice it to say here that, while La Guardia drew and kept considerable upper-class support by his fiscal policies and good city management, his principal support was from the men and women of New York who work for a living. That he rendered them good service is incontrovertible. It must also be recorded that he delighted the people with his bustling and hustling, his denunciation of tin-horn gamblers, bookies, punks and pimps, his radio recitation of menus for housewives and reading of comics to the kiddies via the airwaves and newsreels. The latter he regarded as legitimate attention-arresting devices. Why not make ordinarily prosy virtue as attractive as sin? he mused.

La Guardia's flair for drama has been loosely ascribed to his Latin background. But some observation over a period of years leads one to the belief that his showmanship cannot simply be written off as a Latin characteristic. It was born out of the hard necessity of finding simple and effective means of telling the people—the all-too-frequently misled and beguiled people—the honest truth. Thus what was inaccurately written off as some queer La Guardia exhibitionism was actually a political method and one that soon became second nature to him. Vivid images and sharp slogans became the tools of his political craft. What his envious opponents frequently called stunts were simply examples of the La Guardia technique. When the fiery Congressman from New York pulled a lamb chop out of his pocket on the House floor and used it to illustrate his thesis on the high cost of living, that was no piece of vaudeville. It was the La Guardia way of shortcutting to his listeners and, above all, to the masses of people. A ham sandwich bought at a railroad terminal in the Midwest once became the theme of an eloquent lecture to an appreciative farm audience on the relationship of farmer, trust and ultimate consumer. Who will insist that this was demagogic?

For his liberalism, and his sensitivity to the needs of the people, cast him in the role of a political guerrilla playing havoc behind the lines of the two major parties. On the one hand he refused to bow to the old party bosses; on the other, he demonstrated in his early career an impatience with existing third parties, which in his view were doctrinaire and therefore politically ineffective in the sense that La

*LA GUARDIA, *by Jay Franklin. Modern Age Books.*

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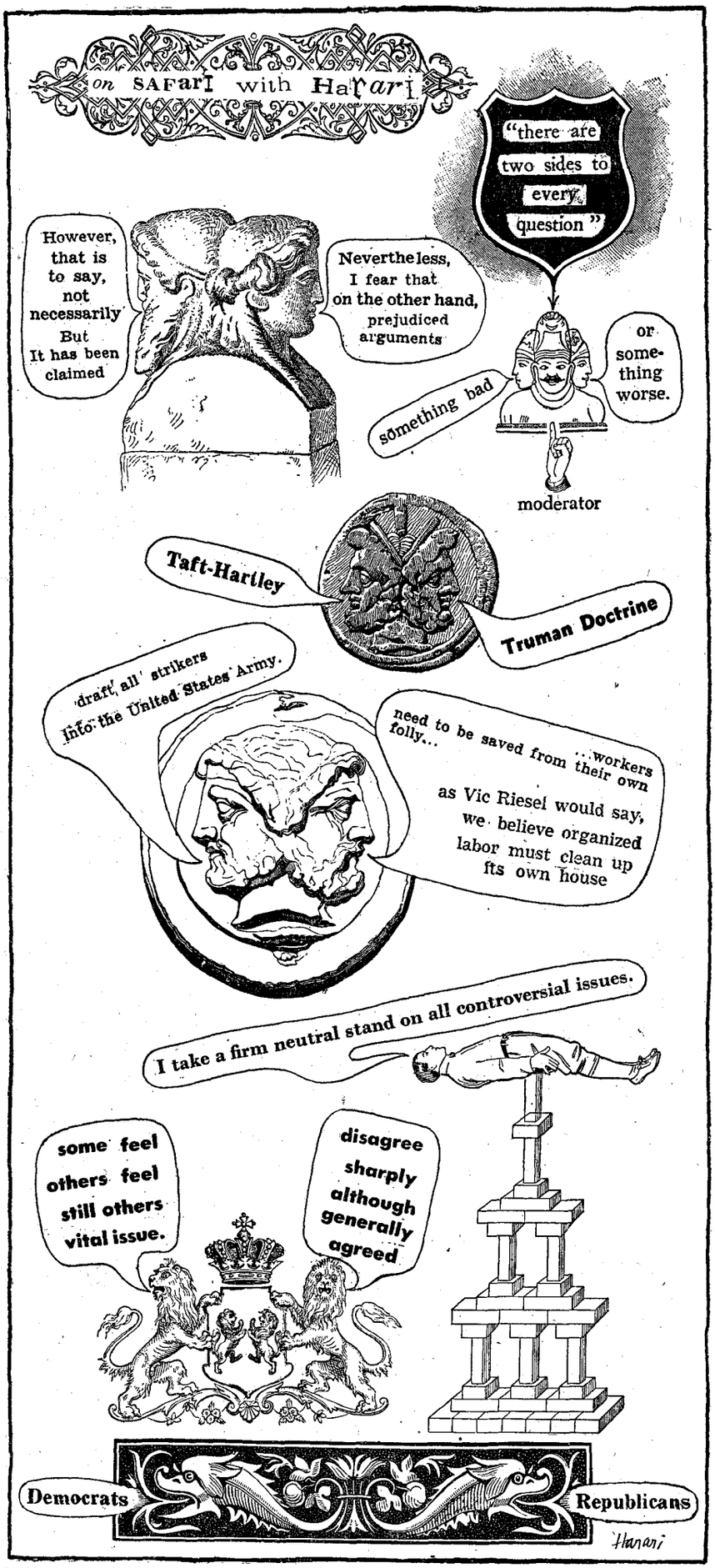
Guardia demanded. His guerrilla role required new, flexible, imaginative techniques—all, however, based on day-to-day contact with and strength among the people.

No doubt La Guardia's political maneuvers made it easy to dub him a chameleon. Entering politics as a Republican, he ran at one time or other on the GOP ticket, the Socialist, the Progressive, the American Labor and the Fusion lines. No objective observer can doubt that political survival was a cardinal principle of the man, but just as emphatically must it be said that throughout his career he clung, in the main, to his basic political principles. Politics is studded with the records of flaming liberals who made their peace with pelf and preferment at the expense of principle. Certainly, opportunity was not lacking for Fiorello to have got himself a piece of the golden calf. But the record shows that he did not. At his death he was an enrolled member of the American Labor Party and he stubbornly withstood the blandishments of the right-wing splitters who left it to form the Liberal Party.

His last years—even his very last weeks—were dedicated to the fight to return the nation to the foreign and domestic policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt. His policies as director-general of UNRRA are a living rebuke both to the isolationists and the Marshall Planners who would force Wall Street policies down hungry European throats. His activity as UNRRA head is warmly remembered in Eastern Europe, in particular, as is his proposal for a $400,000,000 emergency food fund to be administered through the United Nations.

Not even La Guardia's staunchest admirers would deny that there were erratic dips and curves in his political career. Without question he cut corners on occasion and sometimes avoided touchy issues. At times he definitely swam with the stream for sweet expediency's sake. When he spoke on behalf of the Italian Red Cross during the Ethiopian war he certainly outraged anti-fascist opinion but undoubtedly was in harmony with prevailing Italian-American moods. When he appeared on the platform with Herbert Hoover in support of Finnish relief during the Soviet-Finnish war he deliberately associated himself with press-inspired clamor. In his frequent skirmishes with the Transport Workers Union over collective bargaining rights for city employes he received


on SAFARI with Hazari
"there are two sides to every question"
However, that is to say, not necessarily But It has been claimed
Nevertheless, I fear that on the other hand, prejudiced arguments
something bad
or something worse.
moderator
Taft-Hartley
Truman Doctrine
draft all strikers into the United States Army.
need to be saved from their own folly...
...workers
as Vic Riesel would say, we believe organized labor must clean up its own house
I take a firm neutral stand on all controversial issues.
some feel others feel still others vital issue.
disagree sharply although generally agreed
Democrats
Republicans
Hazari

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support from right-wing newspapers which normally hated him. Even more inexplicable, perhaps, was the permanent and savage warfare La Guardia seemed to wage against his own subordinates. Government by tantrum, as one wit said, seemed to be a fixed policy in the La Guardia administration. Perhaps it was in some instances the Little Flower's profound belief in the correctness of his own views but in a number of cases he discharged loyal and able appointees primarily because of pressure from the right. He was particularly sensitive to pressure from the Catholic hierarchy and in his last administration made a number of concessions in that direction. These apparently obscure maneuvers and retreats all generally stemmed from the same source: the relative weakness of the mass movement supporting him. To the degree that there was a powerful movement backing him he stuck to his guns. To the degree there was not, he made what he regarded as the necessary tactical retreats, a position not unusual for a practical politician.

Fiorello's political methods were not always of the antiseptic type beloved by the very good government forces who rallied to his stand. He knew rough-and-tumble politics well and frequently paid the Tammany politicos back in their own coin. But if he was a match for the old party bosses in the hurly-burly of district politics, he also was no mean tactician on larger questions. In the 1944 presidential campaign he was seriously concerned about the growing Vatican opposition to President Roosevelt's policy of unity between the United States and the Soviet Union. He feared that many Roman Catholic voters, whose normal allegiance was with Roosevelt, would be somehow terrorized into supporting Dewey.

When Roosevelt came to New York City late in the 1944 campaign, La Guardia wanted some visible expression of friendliness to Roosevelt from the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but he knew that that would not be easily forthcoming. It was with this problem in mind that he pondered police plans for the parade one day. Suddenly, staring at the typewritten instructions, he snapped his fingers and shouted: "I've got it, I've got it! We're going to change the route of that parade and see to it that it goes past 50th Street and Fifth Avenue!" Changes were accordingly made and the presidential procession moved past 50th Street, where the then Archbishop Spellman was standing on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Since Roosevelt was President, La Guardia shrewdly calculated, the Archbishop would necessarily have to come down from the steps to greet FDR in his car. The prelate did so, and news photographers, as well as a few private cameramen stationed there for the occasion by La Guardia, promptly snapped the picture and broadcast it to every community in the country. While the incident may not have been decisive in winning the so-called Catholic vote for Roosevelt, La Guardia believed firmly that it helped to dissipate lay Catholic opposition to him.

"Dear, do you think Herbert will run again?"

La Guardia was never taken in by Red-baiting. While he differed with the Communists on many occasions, he saw Red-baiting for what it was—a device to attack not only the minority of Communists, but to attack the great mass of people and democracy itself. In February, 1920, he said of Red-baiting, in the then current cry against "bolshevism": "It is used by the sweatshop owner when he speaks of his men demanding a living wage. It is howled by the profiteer. It is ranted forth by rotten political leaders."

Twenty-seven years later he attacked the splitters of progressive unity in much the same vein: "We have reached the point now where anything can be killed by simply branding it Communistic. If one group of liberals gets busy on any one bill the other group either goes dead or openly opposes it. . . . This weapon (Red-baiting) is being used with a great deal of dexterity." (*PM*, May 18.)

A month later, he wrote concerning the Truman Doctrine of "containing" communism by military aid to Greece and Turkey: "It will not be long before the plan for military aid to Greece will have to be recognized as a costly mistake and a wrong approach." (*PM*, August 10.)

La Guardia's social philosophy was never systematically expounded. Some student of La Guardiana will some day have to make a careful study of the La Guardia speeches, letters and private papers to synthesize such a system. The closest this writer ever got to hearing one was once in a quiet Saturday afternoon *schmooze* at City Hall, when the weekly pace had let down somewhat and Fiorello was feeling expansive. He was bantering goodnaturedly with the writer, then a City Hall correspondent for the *Daily Worker*.

"Hell," he grinned, "I've done more to change the Constitution of the United States than all of you Communists put together.

"You see, you've got to get it at

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both ends. First at one end you abolish child labor. Then at the other end you put in old age pensions and retire workers fairly early. In the middle you set up a structure of minimum wages. And then you have pretty much of a shock-proof system. That's what I've always been fighting for."

That, of course, was not the sum total of the La Guardia social philosophy, but by and large it approximated his publicly-expressed belief in the possibility of reforming and modifying capitalism. He probably had some doubts about the vitality of the capitalist system, doubts which, there is reason to believe, were hardened into a firm conviction as he travelled through Europe as UNRRA head in 1946, but at no time did he develop any finished rationale.

He respected the validity of much of the Marxist criticism of capitalism, without at the same time accepting it. He was interested, however, in socialism as a pragmatic question. Could it work? he asked. He read very closely the Soviet Constitution when that document was cabled to American newspapers in 1936, and began to write an article on it. The article, never completed, was known to have contained a curious criticism of the Soviet Constitution from the left. La Guardia was afraid that the inheritance clauses in it were too liberal and would ultimately permit the amassing of great hereditary fortunes!

LA GUARDIA was a staunch friend of labor but not of it. He moved in Left circles but was no exponent of socialism. Philosophically he was the typical pragmatic American progressive. He was unique in that he, an Easterner and cosmopolitan, associated himself politically and ideologically with the Western progressivism which was principally agrarian at bottom. Historically, this made him a powerful link between the industrial urbanized centers and the middle class revolt on the farms. The linking of the two names in the Norris-La Guardia Act is thus seen as no accident for, historically speaking, both represented great sectors of American society which were of necessity in combat with monopoly control of the nation's economic and political life. As such La Guardia played a great historic role in the period when it was still possible to carry on effective political work for sustained periods by guerrilla warfare within the two major parties.

Today his monument stands not alone in the body of social legislation on which he left his mark, nor even in the greater and finer New York City he left us. It is in the growing trend of progressives to unite to return our nation to the policies of FDR. That unity, which he sought to the end, will find much to inspire it in the life and works of Fiorello La Guardia.

UN: THE MARSHALL STRATEGY

By JOHN STUART

IT WOULD be foolhardy at the moment I write to make any definite estimate of the UN Assembly sessions. To be sure even before the Assembly gathered certain broad trends were easily visible. They have naturally intruded into the thinking of delegates and into the specific work of the various committees. But the last cards have not been played and the element of surprise cannot be ignored. Nor should it be forgotten that the Assembly is a mottled mirror of the complex of international politics. Any definition, therefore, of the Assembly's affairs must take the complex into account and probably not until the foreign ministers meet in London next month will it be possible to judge events at Lake Success. As things appear now the Assembly will run concurrently with the ministers' conference—one undoubtedly affecting the outcome of the other.

I have talked with observers, correspondents and a few delegates. To me, after these conversations and the formal speechmaking, it is clear now that the American delegation arrived with the single objective of driving the Russians out of the United Nations. This, of course, is not to be taken literally. No group can shape events to reach that issue; nor is it possible to force the expulsion of the USSR without bringing on so thunderous an explosion that the UN would become a forgotten whisper. No, the process is much more subtle. The cat can be skinned in more ways than one and the State Department group is becoming artful in using the knife without exposing the blade. What the US representatives are seeking is to surround the Russians with a cordon of Charter revisions, on the one hand, and a bloc of states on the other, so that the Soviets will be present in the United Nations in a physical sense only.

This is Washington's "contribution" to maintaining the peace. Its spokesmen have come well prepared to grasp the initiative. No longer are they the fumbling men of the last Assembly where by and large they were put on the defensive by those who resisted a divided world. This time they moved cautiously. At the last session other nations pressed such matters as condemnation of the Franco regime, stopping the armaments race, or halting the discrimination against Indians in South Africa. The most the American delegation could do was to blunt the sharp edges of the resolutions. The American effort is to reverse its UN role so that others will do the blunting while the United States appears in the guise of saving the world from the Russian hordes. (One irreverent Englishman described Washington's savior complex to me. He said, shaking his head, "Washington is even trying to convince the world that God is an American.") The strategy is to force the Russians into a position where they can only respond negatively. Then Marshall and Austin and Dulles can say: "We have done our best but you see how hopeless it is. We must go ahead without the Russians."

MARSHALL'S opening speech showed the broad outlines of the strategy. The speech even takes into account, albeit indirectly, the bitter disappointment of the American people that the UN was by-passed when the Greek issue crashed into the news and Truman appeared before Congress with his Doctrine. Marshall asked the Assembly to condemn Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria for the civil war in Greece. If such condemnation should be approved the record would be clear that the United States was justified

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in taking "emergency" measures to give money and military brains to the Greek fascists.

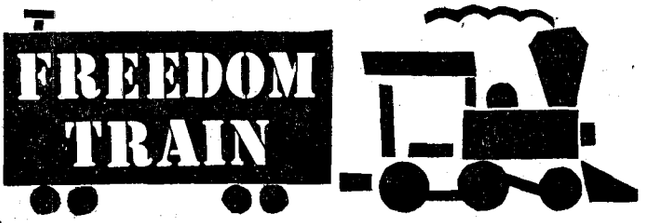
Moreover, such approval of the American resolution would again rouse the Russians into opposition—exactly the American purpose in presenting it—and provide additional reason for isolating them in the Assembly and in the United Nations as a whole. It matters little that Gromyko in the Security Council insisted that the real cause of the internal strife in Greece was the Greek reactionaries and the support they were getting from the United States. It matters even less that the report of the Balkan commission was not unanimous, that Colombia, Belgium and France dissented from it, and that it hardly proves foreign intervention which Marshall is hoodwinking Americans into believing. I must note too that the issue of Greece as it is posed by the American delegation is not offered for discussion on its merits but on the basis that opposition to the American resolution means hostility towards the United States and over-friendliness to the Soviet Union. This is the rubber truncheon approach in diplomacy just as it is a concerted effort to have the General Assembly endorse the Truman Doctrine.

Yes, the American delegation has come well prepared—ventriloquists, dummies and all. One cynical Latin American who advises a delegation (anonymity is the price of frankness) told me cooly and without the least qualm that the recent conference at Petropolis in Brazil was the place where the American strategy was indicated and Latin American support lined up. The countries north and south are acting together as a bloc certainly on those issues on which the United States is determined. And it is a fact that some of the Latin American delegates have privately informed a few of their European colleagues that they do not like what Washington is doing, for they fear that such aggressiveness may boomerang and hurt them most of all. But they are helpless in view of their governments' commitments. They consider Arce of Argentina a most convenient tool for the United States. By yelping and shouting loudest it seems that Argentina, through Arce, feels that it is fulfilling Eva Peron's dream of being made the queen of the Spanish-speaking world—a rather personalized version of Argentina's aspiration to become the center of an international Latin bloc. But at Rio more than standardization of arms was discussed. Standardization of UN policy, for all the secondary rifts and cracks in that seeming unity, became a fact showing itself in the Assembly meetings.

The welding of the bloc provides the votes the United States needs in its efforts to revise the Charter and its provisions on the unanimity of the great powers. Here in my opinion is the most crucial and explosive issue in the Assembly. If Marshall's "little Assembly" becomes a fact the UN becomes the private bailiwick of the bankers who rule American foreign policy. Not only has the United States made the veto issue the center of anti-Soviet feeling, but it is using it as a bulldozer to remove all obstructions to making the American Century a reality. For the veto, in a technical and legal sense, stands in the way of imperialist ambitions. It moreover reduces the inequality between those who can muster large blocs of votes to push their purposes and those who cannot.

The Americans in the Security Council have not resorted to the veto because they have had the votes to halt any resolution. And the myth that American opposition to the veto is based on its desire for majority rule is so much unmitigated nonsense. If matters should ever get difficult for the United States the veto provision would be very convenient and it is worth noting that Marshall in his speech shied away from any suggestion that the veto be limited. It is his alternative proposal of the "little Assembly"—a body that would be set up in opposition to the Security Council—which makes it possible for the State Department to eat its cake and have it too. The veto would be kept more or less intact so that the United States can use it when it wishes; but if someone else's veto interferes with American plans the "little Assembly" can be brought into play to override the decision.

It is more than plain that these revisions introduced in the guise of making the UN machinery hum will make it creak and crack. The French are fearful of it and so are the British for all their seeming deference to Marshall. Hector O'Neil, the British delegate, despite his counter-attack against Vishinsky, is none too eager to pull American chestnuts out of the fire. Vishinsky's speech has had its strong effects. It irritated the American delegation, Mr. Dulles especially. While Vishinsky spoke Dulles sat looking very much like General Keitel at the Nuremberg trial. Vishinsky lanced a boil and it was painful. No one can deny that if Americans have a pure food and drug act to keep them from being poisoned there should be an act to keep us from being slaughtered by the war the Dulles' are preparing. I will not say that most Americans understood Vishinsky's resolution to ban war-mongering in that sense, but it is no infringement of the right of free speech and free press for the United States to commit itself to a resolution which will keep the salesmen of death from fouling the channels of public communication.



IF YOU want power in this country; if you want to make yourselves felt; if you do not want your children to wait long years before they have the bread on the table they ought to have, the leisure in their lives they ought to have, the opportunities in life they ought to have; if you don't want to wait yourselves, write on your banner, so that every political trimmer can read it, so that every politician, no matter how short-sighted he may be, can read it, "We never forget!" If you launch the arrow of sarcasm at labor, we never forget; if there is a division in Congress, and you throw your vote in the wrong scale, we never forget. You may go down on your knees, and say, "I am sorry I did the act"; and we will say, "It will avail you in heaven, but on this side of the grave never." So that a man, in taking up the Labor Question will know he is dealing with a hair-trigger pistol, and will say, "I am to be true to justice and to man, otherwise I am a dead duck."—*Wendell Phillips* to the International Grand Lodge of the Knights of Saint Crispin, a union of shoemakers, April, 1872.

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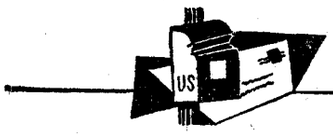

I Knew Emil Carlebach

To New Masses: The latest victim of the Truman Doctrine in Germany is Emil Carlebach, a German anti-fascist hero whose license as an editor of the *Frankfurter Rundschau* was revoked on August 21. Military Government explained his dismissal as resulting from his "unsuitable political views and traits of character" and his "apparent inability to understand the fundamental principles of democracy."

These accusations against Emil Carlebach, whom I have known well since September, 1945, are untenable. Eleven years an inmate of Buchenwald—from the age of nineteen through thirty—and an organizer of the underground in the concentration camp, Emil Carlebach needs no lessons from Military Government officials in fighting fascism or preventing the resurgence of German reaction. In fact he could teach them how not to rehabilitate German industry in alliance with the worst German nationalists and aggressive imperialists.

Seeking some justification of Military Government's accusations, I reread all of Emil Carlebach's weekly editorials of this year. He warns against the resurgence of reaction, exposes the maladministration of denazification, urges a more adequate program of democratization and explains the need for international cooperation for the maintenance of a lasting peace. There is nothing in Carlebach's editorials with which any American GI who fought the Nazis would disagree.

The revocation of Carlebach's license is merely another development in the attack on the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. As early as September, 1945, a month after the paper had been licensed, I went to Frankfurt to investigate the complaints of local conservatives against the paper. The fight was taken up by high Military Government officials, including Ambassador Murphy, but the most that could ever be proved about the paper was that it was consistently and unswervingly anti-fascist. Under Carlebach's dynamic influence, the *Rundschau* has been the most courageous, outspoken anti-fascist paper in the American Zone. Today it is considered dangerous because it does not support anti-Soviet warmongering, "generosity" in denazification or the splitting of Germany into eastern and western states.

"It is regrettable," Emil wrote me last fall, "that there are almost no proponents of progressive ideas [among the Americans in Germany] and one frequently has the impression that many responsible officials consider the stabilization of reaction in Germany to be no danger at all."

Emil Carlebach's dismissal and persecution, like the persecution of George Marshall, Eugene Dennis, Gerhart Eisler and other anti-fascists, is a warning of the battle to be fought at home and abroad by a progressive coalition of democratic people against the Thomas-Rankin mentality.

Arthur D. Kahn.

New York.

British Request

To New Masses: I have often felt that I would like to send you a word of thanks and appreciation for your paper. Before the war I was a regular reader and now buy a copy whenever I can.

I am a member of the Musicians Union, the only trade union for professional musicians, and our policy, the union's, is opposed to commercial broadcasting. In your issue dated July 29 the article entitled "Soap Gets in Your Ears," by Lloyd L. Brown, is, in my opinion, an excellent expose of what commercial broadcasting would mean if it were ever introduced in England. I would like to have your permission to print all or part of that article for our national trade union paper, *Musicians Union Report*.

Once again, my best wishes to NM and your fight against Rankin, the Taft-Hartley law and all forces of fascism and reaction.

Charles Kahn.

London, England.

Permission granted, with pleasure. England has come through many a crisis but we fraternally—and fervently—pray that her people may be spared the trial of tuning in their radios and hearing: "Good morning, this is BBC. Beware . . . beware . . . B.O. . . . B.O. . . . body odor, body odor, body odor."—The Editors.

British Loan

To New Masses: I am preparing material for a book covering the achievements of the Federal Arts Project as, I think, we in Great Britain have a lot to learn from this period in American cultural history. I shall be grateful, therefore, if any of your readers could supply me with broadsheets, pamphlets and books published by or on the Project on the novel, poetry, reportage and drama. I would state that any material loaned to me will be carefully taken care of and that it will be returned as soon as I have extracted the information I require or have had copy prints taken.

G. E. Speck.

Hillcrest, Bankcrescent, Ledbury, Herefordshire, England.

British Exchange

To New Masses: Would any reader of NM care to forward me their read copies in exchange for the *Labor Monthly*, *Communist Review* and other English left-wing magazines?

Ronald T. Howell.

8 Harbour Road, Barry; Glamorgan, S. Wales, England.

Fiery Poems

To New Masses: Thanks to NM for giving us those fiery poems by Eleanor Mabry (NM, September 9). Their vigor and freshness, their plain campaigning, stand out in a time when most poetry seems to be a toy in the hands of poets who have no beliefs—or, since not to take sides is taking the wrong side, wrong beliefs. Miss Mabry's convictions are obviously powerful, and at the same time her imagination has a life of its own.

Probably her poems would profit if their luxurious growth were pruned with more care; but, after all, the fact of the luxurious growth is most important.

Ralph Knight.

Brooklyn.

Sparkling Champagne

To New Masses: I just finished reading Finkelstein's criticism of Thomas Mann as critic. It has made my mind bubble as if I had quaffed some sparkling champagne. Not only on this occasion, but in every contribution signed "S. Finkelstein," I have found meaty information. Now, as I write, and words come to mind, I have an irresistable urge to ask you, in the words of that ancient popular song: "Oh, where did you get that hat, where did you get that tie?" Finkelstein is splendid in criticism on music, art, the drama and whatnot.

Eva R.

New York.

Says It With Sub

To New Masses: Enclosed is six dollars for a year's sub. I enjoyed Lawson's article immensely. Have more of that material in NM. It gives me a better knowledge of American history. Your work is terrific.

Herbert Zimmerman.

Boston.

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review and comment

CLARKTON, U.S.A.

Howard Fast continues the fight for liberty on the new level of the contemporary scene.

By S. FINKELSTEIN

CLARKTON, *by Howard Fast. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. $2.75.*

HOWARD FAST comes pretty close to being the best loved writer in America. And he is a writer who very clearly, in all his books, indicates that he loves America but despises what Alexander Hamilton and the Federalist bankers tried to make of it in the past, or what Standard Oil, US Steel and DuPont are trying to make of it now; that he loves democracy and despises twentieth century capitalism. He even seems to think that capitalism may lead to fascism over the bodies of murdered, innocent human beings. This is one of the themes of the contemporary strike story he tells in *Clarkton*.

This is the book-manufacturer's contradiction. It may be that the great masses of American people are too mentally harried, too much assaulted daily with tons of hypocritical verbiage, to care for anything in their relaxed moments other than a swiftly-paced story. But even within this limited framework, they have their standards. They prefer truthful situations to false ones; they prefer honest human characterizations to phony ones. Given the opportunity to make a choice, they prefer the novelty of truth to the platitudes that a writer falls into when he avoids any study of the way things really happen. No matter that for a while a publisher can get away with second, third and fourth-hand imitations of a literary original, which is what the slick trade consists of; eventually he has to find a new original, a new source of realistic human material, an O. Henry, Jack London, Ring Lardner and Howard Fast.

Fast is not the kind of writer who digs into a piece of experience, worries it, tears it apart and puts it together again, draws every emotional nuance, fresh insight and human lesson from it. Even his historical novels were less historical epics than the record of a man's search for his country's heritage, for the golden thread of a human being's respect and love for other human beings, and his exultation at discovering it. Similarly *Clarkton*, describing the course of a strike in a Massachusetts town, does not go into the nuances of the political or emotional situations it raises. But it makes, through the course of a most exciting narrative, some very important points. It shows, conclusively, that the battle of the strikers against the professional strike-breakers is a battle against an American fascism. It is a most important lesson for any worker who reads the book that his boss is far more class-conscious than he is. The workers in the story are reluctant to listen to the advice of the Communists, but the factory owner, for all his pretensions to being a liberal, immediately brings in the professional "industrial consultants," who have absorbed all the lessons of *Mein Kampf* down to the brass-knuckles and holstered gun. And the liberal boss goes along with them even to the point of deliberate murder, although sometimes he must close his eyes and soothe a turning stomach. The book goes into the emotional life of the factory owner, showing how unsatisfactory his family relations must be with his wife and daughter, how basically lonely he must be, how impossible it is for him to have even a friend. For to a man whose principles of life are built on the exploitation of labor, even emotional relationships become only the kind that can be bought. The book shows, not as a glib generalization but as a nugget of truth worth thinking about, that a worker whose life is built on cooperation with his fellows has a much better chance of discovering true and decent relationships of love and friendship.

The book is limited by its literary tradition. Fast has created a situation central to our times, one that people must ponder over. However, he has not developed the full possibilities of this situation. A "liberal" factory owner is a credible theme for our times, even though the fundamental situation we must know is that it is the factory owner and banker who inspire the fascists, not the gunman who leads the boss. But accepting the special situation of a liberal boss, one must ask just what did he do in twenty "liberal" years between the time he left college and the time he took over his father's factory? What were his feelings about the war in Spain and the rise of Hitler? How does he feel now about fascism, when he has himself become an instrument of American fascism?

A worker would want to know more about the strike itself, how it came about, what its demands were, how it ended. The love scenes are emphasized and carried to a point of complicated entanglement, as between the boss and his dead son's girl friend, the boss' daughter and the Communist doctor, the Communist organizer and the doctor's wife, far beyond the point where the reader can understand them or why they are present.

These are not faults of understanding so much as of a style. The search for swift movement, for easy reading, inevitably means the piling up of exciting situations rather than the rich exploration of a few. It means the frequent use of characterizations which the reader will find familiar, although in a new setting, instead of characterizations which will constantly make the reader stop and ponder over the strangeness of newly-minted truth.

But the central theme which Fast hammers at in this book is one of such vital importance that it demands that this book be read and discussed. It is the answer to the question the union leader asks in the book, "What are you Communists after?" It is the revelation that there are no economic or political struggles anymore in America which can be isolated from the all-embracing battle for and against an

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American fascism. It is because his own life is a living embodiment of this truth that Fast is now sentenced to jail.

And so *Clarkton* is an important book in its theme and its handling, its intention and accomplishment. With it Fast continues on the new level of the contemporary scene the battle he has waged throughout his literary career. It is a battle as vital as that which he now faces with the Rankin committee, which has picked him as a test case to see whether it can start putting people who hate and fight fascism into jail. He has entered the arena of the popular novel, the arena where most of the American people who are readers of books are to be found. The battle he is engaged in is one to restore honesty to the profession, to prove that truth is a better commodity than lies, that people prize the truth when they find it.

THERE are some who would say that this is the only literary battle worth fighting today. I would disagree. There are more problems for literature to tackle—social, human, esthetic and emotional—than any one man or any one style can cope with. No healthy culture can exist without a popular art that is honest in its approach to history and contemporary experience; nor is there anything basically unliterary about the term "popular." A Shakespeare and Dickens rose out of a popular art form. At the same time there can be no popular art of great value unless there are also writers who can rediscover, play with, cleanse and sharpen the fine tool of word phrase and image; writers who will discover all the complexities that make up a human mind; writers who will sink a shaft deep into the social layers of a period, painstakingly mine them, present an age with a full and comprehensive consciousness of itself. If monopoly capital is squeezing the life out of democracy, it must be fought with all the weapons that can be found in the glories of a culture that capitalism hates and discards.

It is important to us to have *Clarkton*, just as it is important to us to have *Leaves of Grass*, Sandburg's life of Lincoln, and the two volumes of *An American Tragedy*. The bourgeois reviewers will try to convince their readers that *Clarkton* isn't literature, and the next day will try to sell the same readers an *Anthony Adverse* or *Under the Volcano* as fine art. They don't know what literature is. *Clarkton* goes back to the theme of the proletarian novel of the early Thirties, with a new maturity of grasp of human emotion, and of the relation between labor and politics. If it is now the fashion to apologize for these older proletarian novels, it should be remembered that they started a ferment in American literature out of which came Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Caldwell's *Kneel to the Rising Sun*, the early and best stories of Richard Wright. Fast has started a new ferment, by again reminding authors that it is well for literature to deal with the problems that are central to the lives of the nation's people, and that they must deal with them honestly precisely because of the presence of fascist and semi-fascist snoopers. Those who attack the book are conscious of its importance, and those who are with Fast in his fight should be equally conscious of the need to support the book, buy it and pass it around. To do anything less would be to limit the book's impact at a time when American life and literature need such a book more than ever before.

"Brothers," oil by Howard Conant. From a group exhibition at New-Age Gallery dedicated to United Nations Week and showing the works of thirty-four artists of thirteen nationalities.

Notes From a Liberal

END OF A BERLIN DIARY, *by William L. Shirer. Knopf.* $3.50.

MR. SHIRER'S new book falls short of expectations. In the first place, it suffers from the limitations of a personal diary. Too often the length of the entries is determined by the amount of free time and the interest of the diarist and not by the intrinsic value of the material. Several pages, for example, are devoted to rambling, sentimental reminiscences about Chicago, hardly pertinent to this book. On the other hand, Shirer merely notes having spent a "sparkling and brilliant" evening with Juan Negrin, the former prime minister of the Spanish Republican government, offering no hint of the subject of the conversation.

Shirer does not succeed in conveying the tension of the war, and the entries on the death of Roosevelt are not as moving as Shirer apparently intended them to be. His impressions of London, Paris and Berlin and his accounts of some of his conversations with outstanding personalities, however, are sensitive and well-written. But on the whole there is too little personal observation and analysis. Approximately one-third of the book is devoted to reprinting historical documents, many of which do not deserve full quotation.

Politically, Shirer's book shows a

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positive strong anti-fascism and a firm advocacy of Big Power cooperation for the maintenance of peace. His entries on the San Francisco conference and its aftermath provide important reading. He recalls the ardent hope of the peoples of the world in the United Nations and reminds his readers of the willingness of the Soviet representatives to cooperate with the other powers, of the American and Russian joint insistence on the veto, of the idealistic words of political leaders since gone sour, of the disappointing American stand on Argentina and Spain at the very inception of the UN.

Shirer states clearly where the blame for the breakdown in Big Power cooperation lies. As early as July 11, 1945, he deplores in his diary the numerous instances in which the Anglo-Americans ignored the objectives for which we fought. He contrasts, for example, the appointment of truly democratic (but not necessarily pro-Soviet) Catholics and Social Democrats by the Russians in Austria with London's and Washington's support of corrupt reactionaries in Italy and Greece. He declares unequivocally: "There is no good reason why this country, which owes its birth and its greatness to one of the fundamental revolutions in world history, should now ally itself with the forces of stark reaction abroad." But the reader who seeks any first-hand analysis of American military government or of the occupation of Germany will be disappointed.

Though Shirer notes that the German workers are the hope for a democratic Germany, and points out that the most clear-thinking element among them are the Communists, a flagrant weakness of his book is his failure to deal with the vast new people's movements in Europe. He records conversations with outstanding European intellectuals and politicians but recounts no interviews with union leaders, leaders of agrarian reform, or of women's and youth organizations. Thus his observations, often sensitive and cultured, are frequently superficial.

Shirer thoughtlessly characterizes the American Communist Party as a tool of the Soviet Union and as a political organization completely divorced from the American scene. These charges are obviously the by-products of ignorance, for evidently he knows nothing about the activity of the Communists in building the American trade unions, in fighting for the rights of the Negro people and in organizing workers against monopoly.

After condemning the Red-scare in America as "something unworthy of us" and bravely attacking our foreign policy in Greece, Turkey, Germany and Japan, Shirer concludes his diary on this note: "I guess I'll stay home, like Candide . . . and cultivate my garden." Surely Shirer must remember 1933 too well to seek retirement now.

ARTHUR D. KAHN.

Refuge Minus Roof

EXISTENTIALISM, *by Jean-Paul Sartre. Philosophical Library.* $2.75.

WHILE Paris was still seething with excitement over existentialism in 1945, Sartre delivered a lecture which briefly and comprehensively summarized his philosophy. This lecture, together with the discussion which followed, is now published in English translation and provides a convenient introduction to existentialism. However, it is questionable how accurate an idea the lay reader will get from this brief account. For Sartre said himself on this occasion that existentialism "is intended strictly for specialists and philosophers." Much of the vogue enjoyed by Sartre comes from the blissfully muddy misconception of this intricate philosophical system by intellectual and not-so-intellectual bohemians looking for some *avant-garde* position in which to stew temporarily.

Sartre took this occasion to answer criticisms by Communists and Catholics. It is significant of the freer intellectual atmosphere in France that Communist ideas are given a hearing by non-Communists. Some of the leading ideas of existentialism are expounded briefly by Sartre in this lecture: "existence precedes essence," "man is what he makes himself," anguish, forlornness, despair, "the human condition," freedom, humanism. The critical reader will discern, however, from this necessarily stark exposition, some features of existentialism that Sartre did not intend to convey, namely, that philosophy's false abstractness, its spurious dilemmas and its internal contradictions.

A prime example of its false abstractness is Sartre's conception of "the human condition." The abstractness of this notion is well exposed by Naville, a French Marxist, whose comments take up most of the discussion

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part of the slim volume. Sartre had denied the existence of a human nature in the eighteenth century sense of a permanently fixed set of traits that transcends the concrete conditions of any given time. But Naville points out that Sartre's human condition is just as abstract as the eighteenth century idea. For Sartre's human condition does not have its being in the empirical world but in the realm of consciousness quite disjoined from the external world. In Naville's words, the circumstances surrounding the human condition "are not articulated"—by which Naville means that Sartre does not take into account the complete set of concrete conditions actually present in the human condition. For Sartre is limiting himself to generalized states of consciousness only and does not encompass the whole rich social and historical context. The only sort of human condition that corresponds to reality, argues Naville, is the full history of man in the world of nature and society, subject to natural and social laws. Sartre denies that the natural history of man exhausts his being or is even the essence of that being.

Nor does Sartre cut the umbilical cord attaching him to theistic philosophy, much as he fancies himself emancipated. We can see this in the false dilemma that he takes over from Dostoyevsky, whose dictum he quotes: "If God doesn't exist, everything would be possible." Since Sartre denies the existence of God, he admits that "everything is permissible" because "neither within him nor without does he (man) find anything to cling to." This is, to adapt a famous phrase of Marx, shamefaced theism. Either supernatural sanction for morality, Sartre is saying, or no sanction at all. But if Sartre were really freed from the moral dogmatism of theism, he would see that moralities based on absolutely human, social values are just as compelling as those into which man has been terrorized through centuries of magic and theism. For the man who has definitively thrown off pre-scientific mysticism another alternative than the two offered by Dostoyevsky, and accepted by Sartre, is possible. This new alternative is the acceptance of a socially-derived scheme of human values.

As for Sartre's inconsistencies at vital points, one stands out glaringly. This is his wavering between a choice based on scientific probabilities and a non-empirical, indeterminate choice, in which the existentialist really finds

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his justification for living and his ethical absolute. Sartre sometimes denies (as on page 51) that free choice is "arbitrary" (that is, without coercion from nature or history). He supports this denial by saying that he defines choice with reference to "involvement"; that is, choice occurs only in some concrete human situation in which alternatives are presented "by forces of circumstances." Yet in many places—and these are the more important for his philosophy—Sartre systematically insists that free choice is indeterminate in the sense that it is not limited by a man's historical past or by natural conditions. Determinists know that choice is free in this non-empirical sense, says Sartre, and therefore they are "cowards" because they deny it. In his criticism of the determinists, Sartre passes adverse judgment on them because "they seek to free themselves from the complete arbitrariness and the complete freedom of their existence." In other words, within a few pages Sartre asserts that choice is not "arbitrary" and that it is completely arbitrary.

In the over-all view Sartre's existentialism therefore tries simultaneously to be wholly emancipated and to creep back into the womb of primitive mystical mentality. It won't work. But existentialism is providing another refuge for the uprooted, declassed, rather frightened intellectual who is hard pressed by the emergency in which we live today. Sartre offers them, as he says, "freedom for freedom's sake," which appears to be this year's successor to art for art's sake. But no amount of "free choice" will stop the atom bombs from falling. Nor will it contribute to relief from the crisis of our time, which Sartre actually claims for his philosophy of "involvement." Only a scientific view and a healthy respect for the processes of nature and history will help us gain both truth and security, and the sooner the existentialists learn this, the better for themselves and the rest of us.

LOUIS HARAP.

Little Boss, What Now?

SEVENTH AVENUE STORY, *by Martin Abzug. Dial.* $3.

THE jungle of the garment industry on Manhattan's West Side is the setting for Martin Abzug's second novel, the story of Larry Furst, sometime garment salesman, who is rejected by the Army in the winter of the Bulge. Given a send-off party by his boss, Julie Meadow, and promised a better job when he returns, he is back the next day and finds that the boss' promise is no better than those made to thousands of GI's and cherished over longer periods of time. Larry is at that time thirty-five years old. With a great deal of confidence but no money, he decides that if he is to go into business for himself it is now or never.

The Wilfit Coat Company, Larry's gift to small business, comes into existence on the basis of a designer, Ben Wildman, stolen from Julie Meadow, and capital borrowed from Larry's mother-in-law. Shortages of everything make the securing of workers and the rental of space and equipment affairs of valor. The fight for orders introduces Larry to Margaret Shea, with whom he has a highly erratic affair; scarcity of material sends him into the arms of black-marketeer Buck Covello. The two of them complete Larry's education.

The affair with Margaret very nearly breaks up Larry's marriage before she leaves him. The deals with Covello cost the company a heavy fine when OPA agents, tipped off by Meadow, come around. Between the loss of his love and the loss of his cash Larry is driven to a kind of catharsis. In the closing scene he and Meadow, both desperate for material, come to see the great man of Algonquin Mills. Larry is called in first, a sign that he had finally established himself:

> "So long, sucker," he said to Meadow as he closed the door behind him and walked down the carpeted corridor toward Huggins' office. Yet he knew that he, Larry Furst, was no better [than Meadow]. They were both victims of the same forces, just a pair of all-around, all-day suckers.

Abzug's first book, *Spearhead*, was weakened by a failure to dramatize situations. This is largely overcome in the present work, and the style, while sometimes still clumsy, is far better developed than in the earlier novel. Much of the dialogue is very good, done with an almost dictaphonic recording of the idioms and cliches his characters use. The plot is a little too small for the book; it is so simple and unelaborated that it seems as if Abzug had been forced to pile up events of a similar nature one after another in order to make the story go the required distance. The result is a

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series of situations which do little to add depth to the novel and in which the characters cannot generate enough friction to achieve the movement necessary to their development.

Of the figures in the story, the minor ones are often simply sketched, without need for elaboration, and the sketches are sharp and good. It is Larry who presents a nice problem, and it seems to me that the author was never able to get him quite in the proper perspective. On the one hand Larry is presented as a pretty good fellow, as intelligent, capable, a man with some sensitivity and certain idealisms, limited as they may seem. The unevenly developed and sometimes contradictory affair with Margaret shows him to be callow, and his attitudes generally sophomoric.

At the same time that Larry is this kind of unheroic hero, Abzug seems to see him as the underdog fighting in the jungle while the great millmen, the gods of the garment trade, look on and are not moved. The reader is likely to have mixed feelings, for while Larry in his inadequacies, frustrations and struggles is a pitiable human figure, his desire to become a manufacturer and the under-handed methods he uses and is forced to use make him into something else again—the neurotic "cockroach" boss. It seems to me that this lack or loss of perspective is the biggest flaw in the book. Still, Abzug's work is interesting throughout and marks a definite advance in his development.

THOMAS MCGRATH.

Flyspecktator

HELLBOX, *by John O'Hara. Random House.* $2.50.

THE description of this book as a collection of twenty-six short stories is misleading. They are not stories. They are fragments, particles, little crumbs flicked off an untidy table. They have no beginning, no middle, no end. And they all read as though written at four o'clock in the morning, after the bars have closed, after the last drunk has been sent home, the lights turned out and nothing left but the smell of stale, flat beer.

One wonders why Mr. O'Hara confines himself to such small limits. It may be because the capsule-sized contribution fits so neatly into the pages of the *New Yorker*, where most of these "stories" originally appeared. Whatever the reason, Mr. O'Hara deals only with what can be seen through a pinhole, and he reports it so laconically, so economically, so cryptically and tersely that frequently he leaves out too much and the reader is left dangling with a choice of several interpretations or, unhappily, with the feeling that there is no interpretation at all. It doesn't seem important, anyway.

Mr. O'Hara's characters are people whose frustrations one is not likely to linger over for long. For the most part they are a scurvy lot; their problems are on the sordid side and futility is the mark of them all. They are hardly worth the trouble. Maybe that is why Mr. O'Hara doesn't bother much with them. He refrains both from probing the reasons for their being what they are, and from attempting to resolve their shabby problems.

One would assume from this collection of swift outlines that Mr. O'Hara has a low opinion of the human race in general, and just doesn't like people. With one or two exceptions, his attitude toward his own characters is one of utter contempt. They deserve it; they are coarse, crude and insensitive and they are driven by small, unlovely lusts. The author presents them starkly and unsympathetically, as though to say, "This is the way people are, what can you do about them?"

There is the small-town doctor who keeps himself saturated in rye while waiting to go insane. There is the Hollywood bigshot who, in spite of his doctor's warning that it will kill him, insists on seducing young women. There is the gruesome couple who maintain themselves by showing dirty movies to rich friends. There is at least one classic O'Hara heel, there is a bitter Hollywood actress on the way down, there is a rich playboy drumming and drinking himself to death, there is the inevitable O'Hara nightclub wise guy, and there is a whole collection of assorted individuals who know that "you can't go home again" but who keep trying. This latter is a constantly recurring theme in the present collection, rather mawkish mournfulness over what is gone and can never be again.

But through it all Mr. O'Hara maintains a sort of neutrality. He doesn't care who kills the fly; he is preoccupied solely with the speck it leaves behind it.

LAWRENCE EMERY.

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FILMS

"THE ROMANCE OF ROSY RIDGE," a film which treats the post-Civil War reconstruction period in the border state of Missouri with contemporary implications, is done in simple, pastoral fashion, and its characters strangely resemble people, rather than Hollywood stars. From a story by MacKinlay Kantor, author of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the picture is rather slow-moving, becomes oversentimental in its romance, and oversimplifies the problem of the hatreds left over from the Civil War. Yet it does manage to say a few words on the subject of democracy. It does intimate, however vaguely, that the feuds between neighbors, who fought on both sides, are not natural or accidental but deliberately fomented by the leading businessman in the town —with the aid of a band of hooded night-riders (although the name Ku Klux Klan is carefully avoided).

Van Johnson, as a school-teacher, veteran of the Union Army, who easily settles all the feuds between the farmers, gives a performance which, while not reaching great histrionic heights, is unaffected and forthright. He sings folk songs (some old, and some new, supplied by Earl Robinson and Lewis Allan) without any effort at style. In fact, as he sings at his work in the fields it comes as a great surprise that there is no hundred-piece symphonic orchestra suddenly accompanying him.

The other characters are handled well. The direction is slow, but not too slow for the mood of the story, and the camera work is proficient, though uninspired.

This is no social document, and it seems a pity that the subject matter was given so superficial and glib a treatment. However, it is a relief to see a film in which the great tussle between hero and villain is not over stolen jewels or a pretty girl, but over a principle which is part of the American tradition. The tragedy is that the movie does not have the courage to state this principle clearly and strongly, merely skirting around it. Were Hollywood fulfilling its responsibility to the public, this picture would hardly be worth more than run-of-the-mill comment. But things being what they are it must be noted as one attempt, feeble though it may be, to state a social truth.

ETHEL KLEIN.

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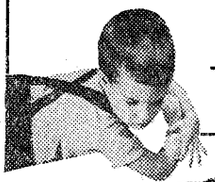

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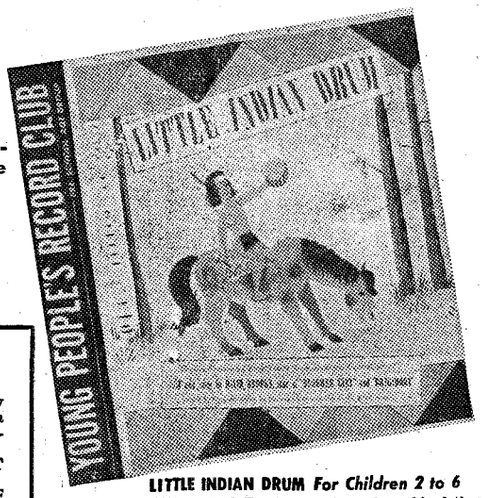

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